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VOCATIONAL EDUCATION FOR AMERICAN YOUTH.

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EDUCATION FOR LIVING AND EDUCATION FOR EARNING A LIVING MUST BE REGARDED AS INTEGRAL PARTS OF A COMPREHENSIVE PROGRAM FITTING AMERICAN YOUTH FOR THEIR FUTURE RESPONSIBILITIES. IN THIS COUNTRY, VOCATIONAL EDUCATION SERVES TWO MAJOR FUNCTIONS--(1) IT PROVIDES THE OPPORTUNITY FOR SECONDARY SCHOOL YOUTH TO ACQUIRE, ALONG WITH OR FOLLOWING A GENERAL EDUCATION, SOME TYPE OF SPECIFIC AND USEFUL OCCUPATIONAL TRAINING, AND (2) IT PROVIDES A VERY IMPORTANT CONTINUING PROGRAM OF TRAINING FOR OUT-OF-SCHOOL YOUTH AND ADULTS WHO WANT AND CAN PROFIT FROM EXTENDED SKILLS, KNOWLEDGE, AND UNDERSTANDINGS IN A CHOSEN OCCUPATION. THIS BOOKLET, CONCERNED ONLY WITH THE FIRST FUNCTION, BRIEFLY DESCRIBES THE PHILOSOPHY UNDERLYING VOCATIONAL EDUCATION, POINTS OUT SOME OF THE ESSENTIAL FEATURES OF A SOUND VOCATIONAL PROGRAM, AND INDICATES THE CONTRIBUTIONS THIS SPECIFIC EDUCATION MAKES TO THE NATION'S SECURITY AND PROSPERITY. (SL)

VOCATIONAL EDUCATION

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for American Youth

VT 001 805

Foreword

America's future leaders sit today at a schoolroom desk. It is our young people who will shape the nation's future and determine its progress, both social and economic. What are our public schools doing to prepare youth to carry such a burden?

From the beginning of time man's chief duty has been to rear his young to live in the world in which they find themselves. Providing the essentials of life—food, clothing, shelter—although the first necessity, is not enough. Training in the ability to live peaceably and happily with their neighbors and to assume their fair share of responsibility in their community must also be given. Education for living and education for earning a living must be regarded as integral parts of a comprehensive program fitting American youth for their future responsibilities. It is in this belief that vocational educators have prepared this booklet for the American public.

Vocational education, as it has developed in this country, serves two major functions. It provides opportunity for secondary school youth to acquire, along with or following a general education, some type of specific and useful occupational training. It also provides a very important continuing program of training for out-of-school youth and adults who want and can profit from extended skills, knowledge, and understandings in a chosen occupation.

This booklet is concerned only with the first function — **vocational education for American secondary school youth.** It describes briefly the philosophy underlying vocational education, points out some of the essential features of a sound vocational pro-

gram, and reminds us of the contributions this specific type of education makes to our nation's security and prosperity.

It should emphasize for all Americans the vital importance of an educational program which prepares youth to lead a full and productive life for economic self-reliance and effective citizenship.

The Meaning of Vocational Education

Vocational education means learning how to work effectively. A democratic society depends on the ability of its citizens to develop personal, social, and civic competence; it also requires its citizens to be occupationally proficient. Most adults spend a large part of their lives earning a living, which implies that education for work should be an essential part of every individual's complete education.

Education for occupational competence should be an integral part and necessary feature of the educational program for every boy and girl coming of age in the second half of the twentieth century. There is no question of "preparation for citizenship" or "vocational preparation." It is fulfilling the need for both that should claim the attention and efforts of those charged with the responsibility for planning an effective school program.

In determining the kinds of educational programs that will most nearly meet the needs of young people today, training for occupational competence—vocational education—should be given considerable emphasis. Youth must have experiences which will enable them to secure, develop, and use the special skills, abilities, understandings, and information they will need in entering, or progressing in their chosen vocations. These experiences form the pattern of vocational education. The goal of every vocational pro-

gram is to contribute to the development of a well-balanced individual who will possess the added resource of preparation for earning a livelihood.

Courses in a secondary school curriculum may properly be designated as vocational when the following conditions or characteristics are found:

1. the aim of the course is to train individuals for proficiency in a specific occupation
2. the teaching content is such that will specifically function in the occupation; it is based upon an up-to-date analysis of the occupation as practiced by the most successful and efficient workers in it
3. the students have made a tentative vocational choice based on their own interests and aptitudes as they meet the requirements of the occupation
4. the instructional environment approximates, to the maximum possible degree, the present working conditions of the occupation
5. the teacher has had appropriate training and experience and is skilled in the occupation for which he is providing training
6. the course is sufficiently complete to actually develop a degree of vocational competence on a given occupational level
7. the instruction includes skills, technical knowledge, understandings, attitudes, safety habits, and related information essential to success in the occupation chosen.

Vocational Education and General Education Supplement Each Other

The term "vocational education" has been misinterpreted to mean only those forms of training required in the performance of specialized skills. In the current concept, however, vocational education includes other knowledge, understandings, and skills which will contribute to a satisfying and useful life of employment in a selected occupation. Traditionally, vocational education and general education have at times been in competition. There is an increasing acceptance of the belief that these two aspects of the educational program are not in conflict, but instead, complement and support each other.

One without the other lacks full effectiveness. People must be taught to live, but it is only through the means of earning a living that this objective is made possible.

The current recognition of relationship between vocational education and general education should not blind us, however, to the actual functional differences. Vocational education is offered primarily to develop competence to perform successfully in an occupation. If a vocational program does not satisfy this criterion, it cannot be justified. If courses are taken by students to prepare for entrance into a specific occupation, such courses should be so directed that they offer definite preparation to meet the requirements of chosen vocations.

Goals of Vocational Education

Courses and activities designed to prepare students for specific occupations should not lose their identity in the total educational program. A sound program of vocational education should be designed to accomplish the following goals:

(a) contribute to the educational program by making it more purposeful and functional, especially in the development of abilities and work attitudes which are essential to the success of the worker

(b) provide opportunity for youth in the secondary school to supplement a general education with specific occupational training in marketable skills and knowledge or in those skills and knowledge which will fit them for adult family responsibilities

(c) assist each individual youth in the secondary schools to understand more clearly his interests, aptitudes, and abilities so that he may choose a suitable occupational objective.

For Whom Is Vocational Education?

The youth in our secondary schools have varied talents, aptitudes, interests, and ambitions. Some are best served by programs preparing them for college; some are best served by the vocational programs. Students with abilities and interests fitting them to use their minds and hands in those occupations concerned with the fields of agriculture, trades and industries, business, homemaking, and distribution which do not require a four-years' college education will gain much from high school vocational programs.

Within the lifetime of many of us, it was possible for young people to select and prepare for homemaking responsibilities and for wage-earning employment without resorting to a planned program of public vocational school instruction. Home and family played greater parts in training for occupational competency. The school terms were relatively short, allowing time for part-time employment. Youth who expected to enter a trade terminated formal education at an early age and were able to learn their occupations while on the job. The trend in today's society is to keep youth in school as long as possible; and occupations today require more complex skills and much more technical and scientific knowledge. The trial and error basis of learning on the job is too wasteful to be tolerated in our economy.

Today, it is impractical, if not impossible, for youth to properly prepare themselves for a productive life and for wage-earning employment—unless the secondary schools offer some assistance.

High school curriculums must change with the changing industrial, economic, and social order if the schools are to fulfill their obligation to the society they are intended to serve. High schools, therefore, must render an effective educational service to all youth and

not just to a few who will continue their education in institutions of higher learning. The schools have as much responsibility for helping prepare the boy who is going to be an auto mechanic to meet his specific problems through vocational education as they have for helping the boy who is going to be a lawyer to meet his needs through academic courses for college entrance.

Vocational education in the public schools serves most effectively those students who will enter certain pursuits in agriculture, distribution, homemaking, business, and industry. **It cannot and is not intended to serve all youth.**

Vocational courses should not be considered a "dumping ground" for retarded students and disciplinary cases. These pupils need special attention, but vocational classes are not the real solution. All students in a specific occupational preparatory class must meet the intelligence, aptitude, and physical requirements necessary for employment in the occupation for which the instruction is organized. The school system should not guide pupils into vocational courses for which the youth are unsuited and unqualified. At the other extreme, it should not be taken for granted that all students of exceptional mentality should enter occupations demanding a four-year liberal arts college education. There is a bright future for talented youth in skilled and technical occupations, calling for a high degree of intelligence which is developed through preparatory and advanced vocational training. Students who fail in or rebel at general education courses often succeed in vocational classes, not because of the intelligence level involved, but because their natural capacity and interest are in other than academic lines. Pupils in all vocational classes must have the intelligence and ability to profit from the instruction given for the particular occupation.

One of the most valuable functions of vocational education in the secondary schools is the discovery and development of natural ability. The basic purpose of, and the primary justification for, vocational education is that of assisting selected individuals to increase their usefulness through greater proficiency in a suitable occupation. The key to effective programs of vocational education is **selection,** and the answer to the question "Who should take vocational courses?" may be found through efficient, functional, and practical vocational guidance services.

Vocational Guidance

In the building of a better economy and in providing security for individuals, the task of selecting the work in which the individual is most likely to succeed must not be left to chance. Vocational guidance is an indispensable service in connection with every phase of vocational education.

Young people need guidance in making realistic vocational and educational plans. It is imperative that they know about opportunities in all fields of work. There must be a conscious effort to prepare boys and girls for the world of work in keeping with available opportunities. To this end the guidance service of the secondary school does much to overcome the apathy of youth toward some occupations and to forestall an oversupply of aspirants for the available number of professional jobs. Good guidance services help to direct youth into programs of preparation for jobs in the adult community for which they have ability and in which they have prospects of success, when the guidance staff has an understanding of and a sympathetic attitude toward vocational education.

An essential aim of the secondary school is to assist each individual student to understand more clearly his interests, aptitudes, and abilities, and as a result of this self-

appraisal to choose a suitable occupational objective. All programs of vocational education should be preceded, accompanied, and followed by adequate and functional guidance services.

One of the important adjuncts to effective guidance services, and in turn to effective trade and industrial vocational programs, is industrial arts education. By helping to introduce students to the many aspects of our industrial society, it enables them to make wiser choices of their vocational goals.

Features of Vocational Education

Programs of vocational education are characterized by teaching methods which stress "learning by doing." Because people learn to work best in a work environment, every effort is made to approximate actual working conditions and job situations.

Trade and industrial education is given in shops which closely simulate the realities of the workaday world, and actual productive work is carried on in accordance with standard practices of the occupation. Some of the most effective programs are operated on a cooperative basis, whereby the student is provided organized and supervised instruction while spending part time in industry and part time in the school. This same procedure is followed for business and for distributive education students, who spend a portion of their time in wage-earning employment under supervision, while receiving classroom instruction in school. Supervised work projects on the farm and in the home constitute an essential part of the instructional program in vocational agriculture and homemaking. All these situations are examples of "learning by doing."

A good vocational program for secondary-school-aged boys and girls is comprised of a balanced correlation of occupational experiences, general education studies, and subjects

related directly to the chosen occupational field. English, social studies, science, mathematics, health education, music, and physical education are subjects found in properly organized vocational education programs. Extra-curricular activities, such as sports, dramatics, and social clubs, are provided, as they are in the academic program. In addition, subjects related directly to the chosen occupation form an important part of the course of study. Related subjects include the application of mathematical and scientific principles and blueprint reading for the industrial student; merchandise information and sales promotion for the distributive education pupil; farm mechanics and management for the agricultural student; and art and consumption of goods and services for the home economics students.

Teachers and Administrators

Genuine vocational education cannot be taught successfully by those who have confined their training and experience to academic education, that is to say, by teachers who have spent all their lives in classrooms as students or teachers.

Vocational education does not result from the teaching of theory by those who have had only vicarious experience in vocations or by those who have learned it in school from another teacher. Vocational courses must be given by those who have had working experience in their field and, where applicable, have earned their living on the job. The prospective worker needs more than specific skills; he needs to acquire proper attitudes, work habits, understandings, and technical knowledges that can be developed best by one who understands them because of his own experiences. If American youth are to be adequately served, instructors in every phase of vocational work should be persons who are vocationally competent as

well as educationally and professionally qualified.

The good vocational teacher remains occupationally competent and alert. He keeps abreast of changing conditions so that he may teach the latest techniques and thereby enable his pupils to emerge into a world, not of the past, but of present "know how." A vocational teacher has both knowledge and demonstrable skills. He must be a craftsman of the first order in the occupation he teaches, and in addition he must meet the special professional vocational education requirements as established by the state plan for vocational education in the respective states. Thus the vocational teacher must have had extensive training in order to prepare for his place in the field of education.

The administrator of a vocational program must also be a well-rounded person. If he is to establish an effective program of vocational education, in a single school or a larger district, he should have occupational experience in addition to professional training in education and administration. The more thorough and more specialized the preparation for his position, the better equipped the administrator will be to deal with vocational and practical arts problems. Understanding the philosophy of vocational education and its role in a total program of education is an important factor in the administration of a vocational program. It is desirable also that the person who is to administer a vocational department in a comprehensive high school have occupational training and a thorough understanding of the philosophy of vocational education.

Regardless of its administrative position in the school system, the vocational program owes much of its success largely to the attitudes displayed by members of the school staff, their sympathy toward and apprecia-

tion for the vocational programs designed to meet the varied needs of boys and girls of secondary school age.

All vocational education schools and classes depend upon the active support of those engaged in the occupations for which instruction is given. They should function only through the counsel and advice of representative advisory committees. Since the time vocational education was first included in the secondary school curriculum, it has operated with the help of many advisory groups—vocational educators were pioneers in the now-prevalent practice of working cooperatively with the community in which the public schools function. Vocational education, even more than other phases of the educational system, must guard against insulating itself from the public. Its programs are only effective when they reflect the everyday operations of the working world, and its graduates can only succeed when they are accepted by a cooperative community which considers itself a partner in the training process. The consistent and effective use of advisory committees is one of the characteristics which marks vocational education.

The Need for Expansion

Many programs of vocational education are now operating in the public school systems throughout our country. This type of education is provided in different ways, depending upon the size, needs, and desires of different communities.

In some localities, vocational instruction is offered in departments of the secondary schools concurrently with academic courses. (These schools are often referred to as comprehensive high schools.) Some communities can justify one or more separate schools specifically for vocational courses; while some counties and states operate schools offering specialized vocational training pro-

grams for students living in a large geographical area. All of these situations may yield satisfactory results, if the criteria for vocational education (see page 3) have been met.

The problem facing us today is not one of deciding which of these systems best serves American youth. All of them have an important role to play, depending upon the size of the community, its wealth, its occupational pattern, labor needs, and its future expectations. The important task to be done at this time is to expand vocational educational opportunities to communities not now adequately served by vocational programs. In hundreds of American communities secondary education does not include vocational education facilities; there are, in addition, many high schools which offer vocational instruction in a very limited and restricted form.

There is evidence that secondary schools are not now organized to attain the desired goal of preparation for occupational competency. The fact that so many boys and girls who enter the ninth grade fail to graduate from high school indicates that a plan of action is long overdue. The secondary school offerings need to be modified and enriched to care for the many young people who seek jobs in the labor markets of this country or become homemakers. The schools and communities which begin now to develop a program of education for work to meet the needs and demands of these young people will make a substantial contribution to our national economy and defense—and to the happiness and welfare of all those they reach through their programs. The school cannot complete the job of preparing every youngster for occupational competence. It can, however, expand facilities for vocational education and make certain that each young person is given the proper guidance and

assistance in selecting a school program to advance his progress toward his vocational objectives.

Another task is the extension and equalization of opportunities for training in a greater number and variety of occupations. For example, as the number of farm workers required to produce our nation's food supply decreases, the need arises for revising the educational program for rural youth. Not every boy who goes to a rural high school should take vocational agriculture, but often that is the only alternative available to him other than an academic course. Opportunities in distributive, business, or industrial education must be provided for all those rural youth who will need to look for jobs in cities and towns rather than on the farm.

One Solution—The Area Vocational School

The answer to many of the problems involved in the secondary school's responsibilities to American youth is found in the educational development usually referred to as the area vocational school.

One of the most important reasons why vocational training opportunities are inadequate to meet the needs of boys and girls of secondary school age is limited financial support in the small school district. Local school districts are often unable to support the cost of a vocational education program, particularly when the number of potential students for each occupation is small. A developing trend is to encourage, through school district reorganization and cooperation, administrative units of adequate size to provide for the vocational programs and services which the constituent units alone could not economically and efficiently support. The establishment of more area vocational schools will help to provide the opportunities for training which American youth need.

America Needs Productive Workers

One of the great needs of American democracy is for more and more competent, skillful, and cooperative producers. America's strength and the well-being of all her citizens are founded on production and the high level of productive capacity displayed by all her workers. Equally important today and in the future is distribution and the energy and intelligence displayed by all those in distributive occupations. Our rapidly-changing society makes it no less essential that future homemakers have training in home and family living.

The tremendous waste of manpower occasioned by the fact that so many people learn to do their jobs by trial and error methods and so many others are employed in jobs for which they are unsuited is a serious handicap to our further development as a mighty nation. All who live by work need organized training for that work. Vocational education provides the necessary education which will enable people to become more effective workers and citizens.

If we are to retain our position of international leadership, our workers must be systematically trained. A primary justification for vocational education is that it increases productivity in every aspect of our economy. Increased productivity, in turn, increases the individual's earning power and contributes directly to his standard of living and to the wealth of the nation and its security. The future will demand ever-higher standards of skills and educated intelligence. The unprecedented technical developments occasioned both by increased automation and atomic power will heighten our nation's dependence upon vocationally-trained, highly-skilled technicians.

The threat of wasted manpower has been

made more acute recently by reports of educational efforts behind the Iron Curtain. Soviet countries are placing increased emphasis upon scientific and technical training which results in occupational competency. They are, according to all reports, succeeding in increasing at a rapid rate the efficiency and productive capacity of all Soviet workers, through their intensive training programs.

If we in this country expect to maintain our leadership in the production and distribution of goods and services, we must expand our efforts to develop intelligent, skilled workers. If we hope to maintain our present high standard of living, we must give more attention to utilizing our human resources to fullest capacity.

Our participation in World War II made imperative the rapid and extensive training of masses of inexperienced persons for jobs in war-production industries, distribution, and agriculture. It necessitated training in homemaking to meet the rapidly changing conditions in home and family life. An unprecedented feat of training, on a vast scale and in a short time, was made possible through the cooperation of vocational schools throughout the country.

One valuable lesson learned from this period of stress which must not be forgotten is that our final strength as a nation, in war or in peace, lies in the effective work skills and adaptability of our citizens. If we are to retain our position as a people proud of our heritage and confident of our destiny, it is imperative that we continue to maintain our ability to produce and the faculty of adjusting to sudden demands upon our manpower.

We can no longer afford to waste any of our resources, least of all our human ones. Education for work in the secondary schools—**vocational education**—is one bulwark of our democracy in which we may place our faith.

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